

Thailand's Country Statement
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Deputy Permanent Secretary for Foreign Affairs and Special Envoy
of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand
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Madame Chair,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,

Let me start by joining others in expressing my appreciation to Indonesia for the excellent arrangements and hospitality extended to the Thai delegation. I also congratulate Indonesia and South Africa on the assumption of the IORA Chairmanship and Vice-Chairmanship respectively, and Australia for the successful Chairmanship over the past two years. Let me also take this opportunity to welcome Somalia and Germany to IORA.

As we prepare to celebrate IORA's 20th anniversary in 2017, Thailand supports Indonesia's proposal to hold the first IORA Summit in that year. This event should give IORA more visibility and relevance in the world stage. We also commend the initiative to work towards the IORA Concord.

As we move forward, the pertinent question before us all is how to enable IORA to play a more **tangible role in building a region of stability and shared prosperity, underpinned by inclusiveness and sustainability, that touches the lives of all its peoples along the rim. In this regard, I would like to highlight a few key aspects of our cooperation.**

Madame Chair,

Over the past two years, the **"Blue Economy"** agenda initiated by Australia has inspired IORA to further explore the enormous potential of the ocean, culminating in the first IORA Ministerial Blue Economy Conference in Mauritius this September. While relying on the Indian Ocean for economic growth, it is our shared responsibility to make it safe, clean, and sustainable. As the Indian Ocean is the crossroads of global trade in the region, it also faces many maritime security challenges including piracy, illegal fishing, human trafficking and drug smuggling.

These challenges call for **our enhanced cooperation in maritime safety and security**. Today, Thailand becomes a signatory of the **IORA's MoU on Search and Rescue Cooperation in the Indian Ocean**. We hope this small step will contribute toward enhancing our collective ability to respond to emergencies at sea.

On **combatting illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing**, Thailand attaches high importance to this issue and firmly supports the Mauritius Declaration on Blue Economy.

Maritime safety and security is essential in the promotion of maritime connectivity, a key component of the Blue Economy. To enhance IORA maritime connectivity, we could also learn from the achievements of IORA's dialogue partners, who rank in the world's top 20 for their Liner Shipping Connectivity Index by UNCTAD.

To provide IORA with new seaport connectivity, logistics corridors, as well as access to the Mekong sub-region, Thailand has been working to connect a deep sea port on the Andaman Sea in the Indian Ocean at Dawei in Myanmar, with a deep sea port on the Gulf of Thailand at Rayong. Once completed, there will be a complementary trade route to the Straits of Malacca with a land bridge, railroads and crude oil and gas pipeline to connect both sea ports together.

We need to strengthen IORA's capacity for **disaster risk management**. The Indian Ocean rim is particularly susceptible to natural disasters including earthquakes, tsunamis, typhoons, and flooding. **Strengthening local community's resilience** to reduce the impacts of disasters and enable a quick recovery should be addressed in IORA.

As disaster risk reduction and preparedness is high on our agenda, Thailand has been playing an active role on this issue in the region. Last year, we hosted the 6th Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (AMCDRR). We have initiated and contributed financial support to establish the **ESCAP Multi-Donor Trust Fund for Tsunami, Disaster and Climate Preparedness in the Indian Ocean and South East Asia Countries**, which could be a significant regional mechanism to build capacities in disaster risk reduction for IORA member states.

Lastly, Thailand supports advancing the agenda for **Gender Equality and Women's Economic Empowerment**. This cross-cutting agenda is essential to strengthen our IORA Community and drive the region's inclusive growth and sustainable development.

Madame Chair,

As a signatory to IORA 16 years ago, Thailand is proud to see IORA grow and become the mature pan-ocean association it is today. Since IORA is well on track to become an observer in the UNGA, Thailand as the Chair of the G77 in 2016, will do what we can to support important issues for IORA at the General Assembly. We have also put forth our candidature for non-permanent membership on the UN Security Council for the term 2017-2018. If elected, Thailand will work to promote global cooperation for security challenges that affect the Indian Ocean Rim, particularly maritime security. It is our endeavor to serve IORA more effectively, both at the regional and global levels.

Thank you.
